



consumer news

Office of Consumer Affairs
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Progress report: safer toys

Food & Drug Administration's Bureau of Product Safety has taken new steps to protect the public by removing unsafe toys from the market. The new steps include (1) use of consumer deputies to help check toy stores, (2) new pre-sale checking, (3) suggestions for better toy recall methods, (4) seizures of dangerous toys, (5) a computerized list of banned toys.

- **Consumer deputies**—Bureau of Product Safety recently began a pilot project with consumer groups in San Francisco, Minneapolis, Atlanta & Baltimore to search out unsafe toys in retail stores. The "consumer deputies" are provided with a list of banned toys and with certain standards that toys must meet. Their aim is to find banned toys that are still on the shelf and to discover unsafe toys that have not yet been banned. The deputies will expand FDA's ability to make sure that banned toys do not remain on the market.

- **Pre-sale checks**—FDA inspectors attended major spring toy fairs held by manufacturers in New York & Dallas to identify potentially dangerous toys before they were made available to the public. Hazards were pointed out to the manufacturers who agreed to make corrections prior to sale.

- **Recall methods**—Bureau of Product Safety and representatives of several retail associations have met to discuss methods for speeding removal of banned toys from store shelves. Most retailers say it is difficult to determine which are the unsafe toys and which are the redesigned toys that meet the standards. The retailers, as a result of this meeting, formed an ad hoc committee to consider better methods of accomplishing recalls. They expect to report their results soon. The Bureau is also considering new regulations to require a code on all toys indicating the manufacturer and the date the toys were placed on the market.

- **Seizures**—since Jan. 1 of this year, FDA has made 14 seizures involving over 5,000 toys. The toys were seized after the companies refused to recall them voluntarily or when they continued to ship them after they were placed on the banned toy list.

Some of the toys involved were Roly-Poly Pony musical rocking horse, made for Childhood Interests, Alan Jay, Roselle Park, NJ; various plastic toys imported or manufactured by Happy Mates Division of Electro-Plastic Inc., Newark, NJ; rattles manufactured for or by Stahlwood Toy Manufacturing Co. and Baby World Co. Inc., both of New York; highly flammable toy clown dolls imported by Cut-Rate Linoleum Stores, New Orleans, LA; 2 lawn dart games manufactured by Hasbro Industries, Pawtucket, RI, and Regent Sports Corp., Hauppauge, NY.

- **Banned Toy list**—Starting with the June 15 banned toy list, FDA is providing consumers with a computer printout of the total cumulative banned list. This printout has marks to indicate which are the new additions to the list.

With FDA's change from a monthly list to a cumulative list, CONSUMER NEWS will no longer print the toy lists on a regular basis, but CONSUMER NEWS will report each time Bureau of Product Safety updates the cumulative list of banned toys.

If you would like copies of the list or more information about toy safety policies or programs, write to L. J. Chisholm, Bureau of Product Safety, Food & Drug Administration, 5401 Westbard Ave., Bethesda, MD 20016.

If you believe a toy is hazardous and should not be on the market, you may want to notify the product safety bureau, describing the toy, its name (if any), model number (if any), name and address of manufacturer (or distributor) and name of store stocking the toy. Send your comments to L. J. Chisholm at the above address.

Energy conservation: What you can do

Office of Consumer Affairs, in conjunction with the President's Joint Board on Fuel & Fuel Transport, is encouraging consumers to conserve energy this summer in order to save money and help alleviate threatened power shortages.

Here are some energy-saving—and money-saving—ideas for consumers:

- When you are using the oven, don't open the door unnecessarily. Every time you do, the oven loses 20% of its heat. Consider cooking two or more dishes at one time even if they are not to be served at the same time. It takes much less power to reheat a dish later than to cook it anew.

- If you have a refrigerator that needs to be defrosted, do so before the ice is 1/4-inch thick. Ice acts as an insulation and lessens the cooling power of the coils.

- If you are thinking of buying a new refrigerator-freezer, remember that a frost-free model uses approximately 50% more power than a frost type.

- Run your dishwasher only when you have a full load and preferably in the morning or late evening when temperatures are lower and demands on electricity are not so high.

- Don't let hot water faucets leak. A leak that will fill an ordinary cup in 10 minutes wastes 3280 gallons a year—water you have to heat.

- Make sure your house is well insulated. This is as important in summer as in winter.

- Use storm windows year round to help cut your heating & cooling bills up to 15%.

- If your house is air conditioned, keep your windows closed. You can't cool the outdoors.

- Save activities that generate heat—such as baking—for the cooler early morning or late evening hours so as to make less work for your air conditioner.

- Turn off lights, radios & TVs when there is no one in the room. They not only waste electricity, they generate heat as well. It will be hot enough without adding to your discomfort.

Hearings on interstate land sales

Housing & Urban Development Dept.'s Office of Interstate Land Sales Registration has begun nationwide hearings into problems faced by the public in dealing with land developers who advertise and/or sell across state lines. The hearings are part of a campaign by HUD to protect consumers who buy undeveloped land—often at “bargain prices” from a fast-talking salesman—intending to build a vacation house or retirement dwelling on the land or to keep the land for investment purposes. Many consumers buy land but do not inspect it personally. Then they find that the land lacks essential features such as paved roads, flood protection, sewage facilities, gas & electricity and nearby school and medical facilities.

Interstate Land Sales Administrator George K. Bernstein says that land sales abuses have become widespread, and that they are not unique to any part of the country. He says: “Although a vast majority of the developments are located in the better known recreational and retirement areas, the developers, including the fly-by-night operators, zero in on markets anywhere they think there's a fast buck to be made.”

Bernstein says that a Federal law, which went into effect in 1969, requires interstate land developers to provide each buyer with a property report describing limitations of the land to be purchased. But, he adds, not enough consumers are familiar with this requirement. The land sales hearings are designed to publicize the nature of land sales abuses, inform consumers of their rights under the law and expose the full range of consumer complaints in this area of interstate commerce.

The first hearings were May 31 & June 1 in Washington, DC, June 12 & 13 in Kansas City and June 14 & 15 in Denver. The next scheduled hearings will be in Boston, Sept. 14 & 15; New York, Sept. 19 & 20; Atlanta, Sept. 27 & 28. Later hearings are planned for 10 other cities.

For more information on interstate land sales and on HUD's consumer protection efforts, write to Office of Interstate Land Sales Registration, Housing & Urban Development Dept., Washington, DC 20410.

Mobile home mortgages

Government National Mortgage Association of Housing & Urban Development Dept. has introduced a new finance program to make mobile-home loans more widely available and to make loan terms easier to meet.

The program permits savings & loan associations and other lending institutions to sell mobile-home mortgages that are insured by Federal Housing Administration to investors. This makes mobile home loans more attractive to many lending institutions because by being permitted to sell the mortgages, they will have the funds to make more loans to mobile-home buyers. The program also permits loan repayments to be spread out over longer periods, enabling many consumers to buy mobile homes who otherwise could not have afforded them.

In addition, as more mobile homes are financed by FHA-insured loans, more consumers will be protected by FHA minimum property standards requiring sound construction for mobile homes.

For more information, write to Office of Mortgage-Backed Securities, Government National Mortgage Association, Dept. of Housing & Urban Development, Washington, DC 20410.

Tire code lists

Last year, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration of Transportation Dept. assigned code letters to processors of retreaded tires and revised the list of code letters assigned to new tire manufacturers.

Lists of the tire codes were published in the Jan. 11 issue of the *Federal Register*, and consumers were advised that they could obtain a reprint of the lists by sending 20¢ to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. But Supt. of Documents soon ran out of the lists and was unable to fill many requests by consumers.

Fortunately, consumers still interested in the lists may now obtain them free directly from the agency. Write to NHTSA, Tire Identification & Record Keeping, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590.

Recall report

The following is a summary of Food & Drug Administration's recent product recall reports. The Complete *FDA Weekly Recall Report* is available free from Office of the Assistant Commissioner for Public Affairs, Food & Drug Administration, Washington, DC 20204.

Sodium salicylate tablets USP, 600 mg (10 grains), enteric coated, 1000 & 5000 tablets in glass bottles lab and 20,000 in drums. Lots numbered 5494-1A, 5494-1B, 5494-2A, 5494-2B, 5494-4A, 4975-A, 4975-B. Made by Strong, Cobb & Arner Inc., Cleveland. Reason for recall: Faulty disintegration.

Recall procedure: Voluntary recall by Strong, Cobb & Arner by phone call to retailers nationwide.

Trylon Apple Blossom Foaming Bath Oil, manufactured by Trylon Products Corp., Chicago, in 27 fluid ounce bottles. Reason for recall: Chemical contamination by *pseudomonas alcaligenes*.

Procedure: Voluntary recall of cases dated Oct. 27, 1971, by manufacturer by phone to retailers nationwide.

Trylon Yellow Jasmine Foaming Oil, manufactured by Trylon Products Corp., Chicago, in 27 fluid ounce bottles.

Reason for recall: Chemical contamination by *pseudomonas alcaligenes*.

Procedure: Voluntary recall of cases dated Oct. 27, 1971, by manufacturer by phone to retailers nationwide.

New Federal publications

Food Facts & Fun With "Butter & Boop" (comic book to communicate need for better nutrition to inner-city children), published by Grocery Manufacturers of America Inc., Agriculture Dept. & Cooperative Extension Service of Rutgers; single copy available free from GMA, 1425 K St., NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Brand Names Identical to Products Purchased & Tested for Use by the Federal Government (a list of some 400 brand name products tested by the Federal Government), published by General Services Administration; available from Consumer Product Information, Washington, DC 20407; 35¢.

Advertising documentation available

The documentation that manufacturers have been submitting to Federal Trade Commission to support advertising claims is now available for consumers and other interested persons. The documentation is on public display at FTC's 11 regional offices. Copies also are for sale.

FTC started requiring manufacturers to substantiate advertising claims on selected products last July as part of a program to discourage advertisers from making false claims and to help consumers get more accurate information about products. Since last July, FTC has required ad substantiation from 7 makers of automobiles, 4 makers of electric razors, 16 air conditioner firms, 12 TV set manufacturers, 8 dentifrice producers, 16 makers of cold & cough remedies and 18 tire producers and distributors.

FTC has issued a staff report evaluating the ad substantiation program so far on the basis of responses received from industries in the first 4 categories. The report says that although some of the responses were well documented, about 30% of the responses left room for doubt as to whether they were adequate to support the claims made. Many of the responses, such as for gasoline mileage, were said to be of questionable relevance to consumers because they relied on "optimum test conditions" rather than average conditions of consumer use.

In addition, at least 30% of the responses were considered so technically written that the average consumer would be unlikely to make use of the data. Therefore, the report said that the real value of the ad substantiation program might lie not in educating the individual consumer so much as in providing information that could be used by public interest advocates, consumer groups & academic institutions in representing the interests of the consumer. Also these groups might translate the information into terms readily understandable to the average consumer.

The staff report may be obtained free by writing to the Secretary, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, DC 20580. The documentation for the first 4 industry groups—autos, electric razors, air conditioners & TVs—may be read at FTC's regional offices in Washington, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Kansas City, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco & Seattle. National Technical Information Service is selling the ad documentation reports by each company in the first 4 industry studies. Each report costs \$3 (except \$6 for General Motors Corp. report). For details on reports, write to NTIS, 5825 Port Royal Rd., Springfield, VA 22151.

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